

A Low Cost Versatile Message Board with Advertising Space

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Background Of The Invention

4 The invention relates to message boards and particularly those message boards that allow the display of interchangeable messages.

6 Message boards are used to convey messages to those viewing it. A message board is typically placed in an area of high traffic or where the intended audience is likely to notice it. Once placed, a message board is generally infrequently moved, if at all. Accordingly, message boards are characterized as being persistently displayed.

10 Prior art message boards generally fall into one of three categories. The first category generally comprises an erasable board, which offers a space where messages can be hand written and erased using some type of marker or chalk. US patent number 5,352,535 presents an example of this type of message board. The obvious disadvantage of such boards is the effort required in the handwriting and erasing the previous messages on the board. The legibility of the messages is variable and depends on the quality of the handwriting. The use of this type of board requires the maintenance of writing instruments and cleaning tools.

20 The second category of message board generally comprises those boards that provide changeable, alphanumeric character bearing elements. The characters are arranged over a given space to form the desired message. An example of such a message board is described in US patent number 4,738,043. These boards offer flexibility to form various messages with reasonable quality. However, the process of forming the message from characters is time consuming. The messages to be written are limited by the availability of certain characters.

28 The third category of message boards generally includes those that provide a selection of cards bearing display information and a set of defined slots in which these cards can be inserted. Examples of such boards are described in US patents 4,171,584 and 4,129,857. Although these boards offer an advantage

over the previous kinds in terms of the time and effort required to change the
2 message, they do require management and storage of the set of message cards.
In order to change a message, the old message card has to be removed and a
4 new card inserted in the new slot. This process becomes tedious when
messages have to be frequently changed. Accordingly, it would be desirable to
6 have a message board that overcomes the disadvantages of prior art message
boards described above.

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Summary Of The Invention

2 The present invention is a low cost message board and method of making
the same. The message board is configurable to display a subset of a larger set
4 of pre-determined messages. The messages to be displayed are selectable with
minimal effort and time.

6 The message board of the invention comprises a plurality of surfaces
connected together such that they are rotatable with respect to a single axis or
8 multiple axes. In its simplest design, the message board includes two surfaces
rotatable around a single axis. The first surface includes a set of messages
10 arranged on its front face in a predefined pattern. The second surface is stacked
over the front face of the first surface, covering the set of messages on the front
12 face of the first surface. The second surface includes one or more windows that
allow selection and display of a subset of the messages available on the first
14 surface as the two surfaces are rotated with respect to each other. In other
embodiments, the message board includes additional stacked surfaces that may
16 include messages and/or windows, wherein proper alignment and relative
rotation of the plurality of surfaces reveals selected messages distributed over
18 the surfaces. The message board of the invention provides a fast efficient
method of selecting and displaying a subset of available messages distributed
20 over the message board surfaces. Persistently exposed areas of the surfaces or
persistently exposed additional surfaces may also be provided to allow persistent
22 display of advertisements, customized names and/or logos, or other text and/or
images.

24 The message board of the invention is especially suitable when messages
need to be frequently changed. It is suitable for display on office, residence, or
26 refrigerator doors. It can be used to display messages regarding the availability
status of a person in his office or residence. It can also be used as a reminder of
28 important to-do tasks. The message board may also be adapted to be used in
retail stores or other commercial facilities.

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Brief Description Of The Drawings

FIG. 1 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 3;

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional side view of the message board of FIG. 3;

FIG. 6 is a plan view of a surface of the message board showing a sample windows arrangement;

FIG. 7 is a view of one surface of the message board showing sample messages;

FIG. 8 is a plan view of a surface of the message board showing an arrangement allowing radial repositioning of windows; and

FIG. 9 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with a third preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 9;

FIG. 11 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with a third preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 11;

FIG. 13 is a perspective exploded view of a assembled message board implemented in accordance with a fourth preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 14 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with a fifth preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 15 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 14;

FIG. 16 is front view of an assembled message board implemented in accordance with a sixth preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 17 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 16;

FIG. 18 is flowchart of a method for making a message board of the invention;

FIG. 19 is flowchart of a method of advertising through use of the
2 message board of the invention; and

FIG. 20 is front view of an assembled message board for use in a retail
4 environment;

FIG. 21 is a view of a lower message surface of the message board of
6 FIG. 20 showing a sample message arrangement;

FIG. 22 is a plan view of an upper surface of the message board of FIG.
8 20 showing a sample windows arrangement;

FIG. 23 is a perspective view of a retail scenario where message boards
10 implemented in accordance with FIGS. 20-22 are utilized to convey messages
and advertising to retail consumers;

FIG. 24 is a perspective view of a dorm scenario wherein a message
12 board implemented in accordance with the principles of the invention is utilized to
14 convey messages and advertising to door room visitors;

FIG. 25 is front view of an assembled message board illustrating use of
16 shape and styling of the surfaces of the board to promote awareness of a
company or product;

FIG. 26 is a perspective exploded view of the message board of FIG. 25;
18 and

FIG. 27 is rear view of the assembled message board of FIG. 25.
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Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiments

FIG. 1 illustrates an assembled message board 1 implemented in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention and FIG. 2 illustrates an exploded view of the message board 1 of FIG. 1.

In this simplest embodiment, the message board 1 comprises two surfaces 2 and 3. The two surfaces 2 and 3 are rotatable around a single axis, indicated as dashed line A-A'. The first surface 2 includes a plurality of messages 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d distributed on a front face 2a of the surface 2 and arranged in a predetermined pattern.

The second surface 3 is stacked over the front face 2a of the first surface 2 and rotatably connected at axis A-A'. The second surface 3 comprises one or more windows 5. Each window 5 is designed in terms of position and size with the capability of respectively displaying at most one of the messages 4a, 4b, 4c, or 4d distributed on a front face 2a of surface 2 at any given position of rotation of the surface 3 with respect to surface 2.

Surfaces 2 and 3 are preferably made of thin rigid or semi-rigid material such as plastic or cardboard. In one embodiment, the first surface 2 may be made of opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent material while the second surface 3 may be opaque. In this embodiment, as surface 3 is rotated relative to the first surface 2, one of the messages 4a, 4b, 4c, or 4d on surface 2 is revealed through the window 5 while the remaining messages remain hidden under the surface 3. Means for attaching the message board to surfaces are provided such that it does not hinder the relative rotation of the surfaces 2 and 3 with respect to each other. These means such as sticky tape, hooks, Velcro, glue, screws, magnets, etc., can be attached to the back side of surfaces 2 or 3 depending on which of the surfaces will be allowed to freely rotate.

In an alternative embodiment, the first surface 2 may be made of opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent material while the second surface 3 is semi-transparent. In this embodiment, as surface 3 is rotated relative to the first surface 2, one of the messages 4a, 4b, 4c, or 4d on surface 2 is revealed

through the window 5 while the remaining messages remain semi-hidden under
2 surface 3.

In yet an alternative embodiment, the first surface 2 may be made of
4 opaque, semi-transparent, or transparent material while the second surface 3 is
transparent or semi-transparent of a first color, and window 5 is transparent of a
6 second color. In this embodiment, as surface 3 is rotated relative to surface 2,
one of the messages 4a, 4b, 4c, or 4d on surface 2 is revealed and highlighted
8 by the second color through the window 5 while the remaining messages are
visible through surface 3 but un-highlighted by the first color.

10 The relative rotation between the two surfaces 2 and 3 can be achieved by
rotation of either surface 2 or 3. In one mode of operation, the first surface 2 is
12 attached to a fixed surface (for example, a wall, a board, a door, etc.) and
surface 3 is rotated relative to surface 2. In another mode of operation, the axis
14 A-A' of rotation of the two surfaces 2, 3 is supported while either of the two
surfaces 2, 3 is free to rotate with respect to the other. The rotation of the
16 surfaces 2, 3 could be achieved manually or through an electro-mechanical
device.

18 FIG. 3 illustrates an assembled message board 10 implemented in
accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention and FIG. 4 illustrates
20 an exploded view of the message board 1 of FIG. 3.

In this embodiment, the message board 10 comprises two surfaces 11
22 and 12. The two surfaces 11 and 12 are rotatable around a single axis, indicated
as dashed line B-B'. In this embodiment the overlaying surface 12 includes a
24 plurality of concentric interfacing rings 12a, 12b, 12c connected such that they
are rotatable with respect to each other. In the preferred embodiment, the
26 interfacing rings 12a, 12b, 12c are connected together using a lap joint
arrangement at the interfaces of the rings 12a, 12b, 12c. FIG. 5 is a cross-
28 sectional side view illustrating this arrangement. As shown therein, the outer ring
12a is configured with a lap member 13a formed along its inner edge. The
30 middle ring 12b is configured with a lap member 13b formed along its outer edge.
When assembled, lap member 13b overlaps lap member 13a such that ring 12b

rotatably secures ring 12a around ring 12b. Middle ring 12b is also configured
2 with a lap member 13c formed along its inner edge. The inner ring 12c is
configured with a lap member 13d formed along its outer edge. When
4 assembled, lap member 13c overlaps lap member 13d such that ring 12c
rotatably secures ring 12b around ring 12a. Additional rings may be similarly
6 implemented.

One or more windows 14a, 14b may be formed in one or more of the
8 concentric interfacing rings 12a, 12b, 12c. In the illustrative embodiment, shown
in FIG. 6, a window 14a is formed in ring 12a and a window 14b is implemented
10 in ring 12c.

Different subsets 16, 17 of messages may be distributed over surface 11
12 to be displayed through the different windows 14a, 14b implemented in rings 12a,
12c. FIG. 7 is a plan view of the first surface 11 implemented for use with
14 second surface 12 in the embodiment shown in FIGS. 3-6. As illustrated in FIG.
7, messages 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d forming a first subset 16 of messages are
16 distributed around the outer periphery of the surface 11 in a first concentric
pattern as shown. Messages 17a, 17b, 17c forming a second subset 17 of
18 messages are distributed around the center 11a of the surface 11 in a second
concentric pattern as shown.

20 When the message board 10 is assembled, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4,
surface 12 (comprising rings 12a, 12b, 12c) is placed over the front face 11a of
22 surface 11 in such a manner that ring 12a overlays the first subset 16 of
messages arranged in the first concentric pattern and ring 12c overlays the
24 second subset 17 of messages arranged in the second concentric pattern. Ring
12a may be rotated to allow window 14a to reveal one of the messages 16a, 16b,
26 16c, 16d in the first subset 16 of messages. Ring 12c may be independently
rotated to allow window 14b to reveal one of the messages 17a, 17b, 17c in the
28 second subset 17 of messages.

The use of independently rotatable rings 12a, 12b, 12c in surface 12
30 allows the windows implemented in each of the rings to be rotated while allowing

other windows in different rings to remain fixed. This independent rotation adds
2 further flexibility in the choice of the messages to display.

For example, ring 12c may be rotated to change the message displayed
4 through window 14b while allowing ring 12a to remain stationary such that the
message displayed through window 14a remains unchanged. Thus, the
6 message displayed through one window 14a can have one of several qualifiers
displayed through the second window 14b. These qualifiers are selected by the
8 relative rotation of the interior ring 12c with respect to messages on surface 11
while the exterior ring 12a is kept fixed.

10 The relative rotation between the two surfaces 11 and 12 can be achieved
by rotation of either surface (or any combination of the rings 12a, 12b, 12c). In
12 one mode of operation, surface 11 is attached to a fixed surface and the second
surface 12 (or independent rings 12a, 12b, 12c) is rotated. This is a more
14 suitable mode when the message board is to be attached to another surface
(e.g., an office or residence door). In another mode of operation, the axis B-B' of
16 rotation of the two surfaces 11, 12 is supported while either of the two surfaces
11, 12 (or any combination of the rings 12a, 12b, 12c) is free to rotate with
18 respect to the other. The rotation of the surfaces 11, 12 (or any combination of
the rings 12a, 12b, 12c) may be achieved manually or through an electro-
20 mechanical device.

It will be appreciated that the number and placement of rings and the
22 number and placement of the windows in the various rings may vary according to
the particular application. For example, ring 12b may be implemented to include
24 its own set of windows to reveal one or more of its own associated subset of
messages. Moreover, there may be additional rings which may or may not
26 include windows to reveal associated messages.

Radial relative repositioning of the windows on a surface 22 relative to a
28 lower level surface 21 on the stack of surfaces may also be achieved through
window design. FIG. 8 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a window 25 that
30 allows radial repositioning without rotation of the surfaces 11, 12. In this
embodiment, the window 25 comprises an opening 26 with sides 26a, 26b

parallel to a given radius of the surface 22. A cover 27 partially fills the opening
2 26, creating a see-through portion 28 of the opening 26. The cover 27 slides
within the opening 26 such that it can be repositioned to different radial positions.
4 This effectively repositions the see-through portion 28 of the window 25 to a new
radial position as well. This radial movement adds further flexibility in the
6 selection of messages to reveal through the windows.

The radial repositioning of windows such as window 25 in FIG. 8 allows
8 different sets of messages to be distributed over the lower surface(s) 21 at
different radii. A subset of one message set is revealed through the opening 26
10 on the lower surface 21, as surface 22 containing the window 25 is rotated, with
the cover 27 set at one radial position. The see-through portion 28 of the
12 opening 26 can then be repositioned radially such that a subset of a different
message set is selected and displayed through the see-through portion 28 of the
14 opening 26 in its new position, as surface 22 is rotated.

FIG. 9 illustrates an assembled message board 30 implemented in
16 accordance with another preferred embodiment of the invention and FIG. 10
illustrates an exploded view of the message board 30 of FIG. 9. Message board
18 30 comprises three or more surfaces 31, 32, and 33. In this embodiment, each
of the surfaces 31, 32, and 33 are rotatable around a single axis, indicated as
20 dashed line C-C'. Surface 1 includes a first set 34 of messages 34a, 34b, 34c,
34d that are distributed on a front face 31a of surface 31 in a first predefined
22 pattern. Surface 32 includes a second set 35 of messages 35a, 35b, 35c
distributed on a front face 32a of surface 32 in a second predefined pattern.
24 Surface 32 also includes one or more windows 36a. Surface 33 includes one or
more windows 37a.

26 Surface 33 is stacked on top of surface 32, and surface 32 is stacked on
top of surface 31. Each of surfaces 31, 32, and 33 rotate independently of one
28 another. In the illustrative embodiment, surfaces 31, 32, and 33 are connected to
be rotatable around the same axis of rotation C-C'.

30 In operation, as surface 33 is rotated relative to surface 32, a subset of
messages 35a, 35b, 35c from the set 35 of available messages distributed over

surface 32 is revealed through the windows 37a of surface 33. Similarly, as
2 surface 32 is rotated relative to surface 31, a subset of messages 34a, 34b, 34c,
34d from the set 34 of available messages distributed over surface 31 is revealed
4 through the windows 36a of surface 32. It should be noted that additional
surfaces may be further similarly added to the stack of surfaces 31, 32, 33. Each
6 additional surface may include viewing windows that allow messages belonging
to sets of messages on surfaces below it in the stack to be revealed via
8 appropriate rotation of the additional surface.

In another alternative embodiment, illustrated in FIGS. 11 and 12, multiple
10 surfaces 41, 42, 43 may be connected to rotate around multiple axes. As
illustrated therein, surface 42 rotates relative to surface 41 around axis D-D',
12 while surface 43 rotates relative to surface 42 around axis E-E'.

FIG. 13 illustrates another alternative embodiment of a message board 50
14 implemented in accordance with the principles of the invention. As shown
therein, message board 50 includes surfaces 51 and 53. Surface 53 comprises
16 concentric interfacing rings 53a, 53b, 53c. Additional surfaces may be stacked
between surface 51 and surface 53, as illustrated in FIG. 13 by single surface 52.
18 These additional surface(s) 52 are used to increase the number of messages
that can be displayed by the message board. The additional surface(s) 52
20 includes one or more windows that may be aligned with windows on front-most
surface 53 such that a subset of messages on one or more surfaces below it in
22 the stack can still be viewed through the aligned windows. Moreover, a number
of messages may be distributed over surface(s) 52. For example, surface 51
24 includes a set 54 of messages 54a, 54b, 54c, 54d arranged in a predefined
pattern around its outer edge. Surface 52 includes a set 55 of messages 55a,
26 55b, 55c, 55d arranged in a predefined pattern around its outer edge and a set
56 of messages 56a, 56b, 56c, 56d arranged in a predefined pattern around its
28 inner edge. Surface 52 also includes a window 57 that, when the message
board 50 is assembled, aligns with at most one of the messages 54a, 54b, 54c,
30 54d on the front face 51a of surface 51. Surface 53 includes a window 58a
implemented in ring 53a and a window 58b implemented in ring 53c. When the

message board 50 is assembled, window 58b aligns with either at most one of
2 the messages 56a, 56b, 56c, 56d on the front face 52a of surface 52. Window
58a aligns with either at most one of the messages 55a, 55b, 55c, 55d on the
4 front face 52a of surface 52 or with the window 57 of surface 52 to reveal at most
one of the messages 54a, 54b, 54c, 54d on the front face 51a of surface 51.

6 Operation of the message board 50 requires proper alignment and
simultaneous rotation of surface 53 and surface 52. If it is desirable to display the
8 messages on any given surface 51, 52, 53, of the message board, the windows
on those surfaces stacked in front of the given surface in the stack must be
10 aligned through appropriate rotation of those surfaces. The surfaces stacked in
front of the given surface displaying the desired message may then be
12 simultaneously rotated relative to the given surface, resulting in subsets of
messages on the given surface to be revealed through windows of each of the
14 surfaces stacked in front of the given surface. For example, with the message
board 50 of FIG. 13, aligning windows 57 and 58a of surfaces 52 and 53 exposes
16 a portion of the front face 51a of surface 51. Surfaces 52 and 53 may then be
simultaneously rotated with respect to surface 51 to select one of the messages
18 54a, 54b, 54c, or 54d on surface 51. Alternatively, ring 53a of surface 53 may be
rotated relative to surface 52 to select one of the messages 55a, 55b, 55c, 55d
20 on surface 52. In either case, ring 53c of surface 53 may be rotated relative to
surface 52 to select one of the messages 56a, 56b, 56c, 56d on surface 52.

22 In an alternative embodiment shown in FIGS. 14 and 15, one or more
transparent surfaces 59 comprising transparent material of a first color 59a and a
24 second color 59b may be added to the stack of surfaces to allow the user to
highlight a message displayed through one or more windows 58a, 59a with
26 different colors. For example, in FIG. 14, the message displayed in window 58b
is overlaid with the second color 59b of transparent surface 59, while the
28 message displayed in window 58a is overlaid with the first color 59a of
transparent surface 59. The availability of multiple transparent colors allows the
30 ability to highlight certain messages using color.

Multiple instances or combinations of the embodiments previously presented may be combined to form a larger message board having multiple axes of rotation. One example of this embodiment is shown in FIGS. 16 and 17, wherein the message board 60 includes a surface 61 which serves as the back-most surface of a message board 62 implemented according to the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2, and a second message board 63 implemented according to the embodiment of FIGS. 3 and 4.

Rotational connection of the various surfaces comprising the message board in any of the previously described embodiments may be achieved using various well-known mechanisms, including but not limited to round-head two-prong brass fasteners, screw posts, snaps, pins with backs, etc. In the illustrative embodiments, the surfaces of the message board are connected together using a threaded bolt 60 inserted through a concentric hole 9a, 9b, 19a, 19b, of proportional size in each of the surfaces. Washers 61a, 61b of appropriate thicknesses may optionally be layered between each of the surfaces to provide a small amount of separation between the surfaces. A threaded nut 62 screws onto the threaded portion of the shaft to rotatably secure the surfaces concentrically around the axis of the bolt. It will be understood that the nut 62 will be screwed on to a point to provide appropriate level of contact among the surfaces. The appropriate level of contact among the surfaces is such that it ensures that the surfaces can rotate easily when external torque is applied, but that the surfaces will remain in position when no external torque is present.

In each of the embodiments described herein, the message board may include handles 54 attached (formed integral or non-integral) to one or more of the surfaces comprising the message board to allow for easy rotation of the surfaces.

Also in each of the embodiments described herein, the messages may comprise text, graphics, or other images. The messages may be printed directly on the surfaces. Alternatively sheets made of appropriate materials such as paper or plastic with an adhesive on their backside and printed or fill-in messages on their front side may be provided. The messages may then be

affixed to the predefined message locations on the front faces of the appropriate
2 surfaces by the user. This allows the user to design a customized set of
message choices.

4 Also in each of the embodiments described herein, any of the persistently
exposed areas of the surfaces (i.e., those areas of the surfaces that are
6 displayed regardless of the rotation of the various surfaces) may be used to
provide an advertising area, a customized name or logo, a picture, or any other
8 image to be displayed regardless of the selected message.

Also in each of the embodiments described herein, an optional surface 65
10 may be connected on any of the exposed areas of the surfaces, which may be
used to provide an advertising area, a customized name or logo, a picture, or any
12 other image to be displayed regardless of the selected message. The size of this
surface is determined such that it does not obscure the viewing of messages
14 through the windows of the surfaces comprising the message board.

FIG. 18 is a method 100 for making a message board of the invention. As
16 illustrated therein, a set of available messages is distributed across a subset of
surfaces (step 101). Optionally, as indicated by dashed lines, an advertisement,
18 customized name and/or image may be implemented (step 102) on an area of a
surface that will be persistently exposed when the message board is assembled.
20 Windows are formed (step 103) on one or more surfaces at locations that will
reveal desired subsets of messages when the message board is assembled.
22 The surfaces are attached to rotate around one or more axes of rotation (step
104).

24 It is to be understood that the purpose of a message board is to
persistently display a message to be conveyed to its intended recipient(s) of the
26 message. Accordingly, it is contemplated that the message board is to be
located in an area where the intended recipient(s) know to look or are likely to
28 see it. The message board of the invention may configured for personal use or
for use in commercial establishments. In addition, when used as an advertising
30 medium, it is contemplated that the nature of the messages are such as to
provide an incentive for the end user to utilize the message board for

communicating with the end user's intended message recipients by placing the message board in a fixed prominent location, thus persistently displaying the advertisement.

As just described, the message board may be used commercially as a means for advertising. FIG. 19 illustrates a method of advertising through use of the message board of the invention. In this method 110, a message board in accordance with the invention and comprising an advertisement in a persistently exposed area or persistently exposed surface of the message board is displayed in a prominent fixed location (step 111). A subset of available messages is selected for persistent display (step 112), for example by rotating the appropriate surface(s) of the message board to reveal the desired subset of messages. The persistently displayed message draws viewers to observe the advertisement during the course of receiving the persistently displayed message. The advertisement may include a company name, a logo, a trademark, a tradename, a service mark, text, and/or graphical or photographic images.

For example, FIGS. 20-22 illustrate a message board 120 for use in a supermarket. The message board is for use at a checkout lane and includes messages for indicating whether the lane is an express lane or regular lane, the number of items allowed, and the form of payment allowed for that lane.

In particular, the message board 120 includes a window 122 having a slidable cover 123 implemented in accordance with the embodiment described in FIG. 8. This slidable cover 123 slides up or down as indicated by the arrow, and selectively reveals or does not reveal a message "EXPRESS LANE" 124 through see-through portion of the window 122.

Message board 120 also includes an "item limit" message board 127 implemented in accordance with the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2, having a window 128 that reveals a selected message 128 indicating the item limit for the lane. Message board 120 also includes a "payment methods accepted" message board 130 implemented in accordance with the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2, having a window 131 that reveals a selected message 131 indicating the types of payment accepted in this lane.

Message board 120 also includes advertising areas 121, 125, 126 that are
2 persistently displayed and which customers are drawn to view due to the draw of
the message board in displaying information about the checkout land that is
4 desired by the customers.

FIG. 23 illustrates a retail scenario where message boards 120a, 120b
6 implemented in accordance with FIGS. 20-22 are utilized to convey messages
and advertising to retail consumers 140. A message board 120a, 120b is
8 displayed above or in front of each checkout lane 142a, 142b. Because the
message boards 120a, 120b are persistently displayed in a prominent location
10 and contains persistent information that retail consumers 140 desire or need to
know about the checkout lanes 142a, 142b that they are considering entering,
12 the message boards 120a, 120b draw the attention of its intended recipients, and
in the course of reading or observing the persistently displayed messages, they
14 are also drawn to notice the persistently displayed advertisements on the
permanently exposed advertising areas or surfaces of the message boards 120a,
16 120b.

In a similar way, message boards used in a non-commercial environment,
18 for example on a dorm room door, also convey both messages and
advertisements. For example, as shown in FIG. 24, a message board 162
20 implemented in accordance with the principles of the invention described herein
is hung on a dorm room door 164. The message board 162 conveys information
22 about the location of the occupant of the room that is desired by visitors 160 to
the dorm room door. In the course of reading or observing the persistently
24 displayed messages from the board 162, the visitors 160 are also drawn to notice
the persistently displayed advertisements on the permanently exposed
26 advertising areas or surfaces of the message boards 162.

The shape and styling of the message board may be configured in virtually
28 an unlimited number of different forms, and may be designed for personal tastes
or to promote commercial advantage. For example, in order to cause the viewer
30 to think of a particular company, one of the surfaces may be shaped and styled
as the image of a trademark or company logo. In another example, one of the

visible surfaces may be shaped and styled as a particular object that may cause the consumer to think of something that a company sells. FIGS. 25, 26, and 27 illustrate an example of a message board 200 that promotes awareness of a company through the shape and styling of the surfaces of the board. As illustrated therein, the message board 200 includes a surface 202 in the shape of a donut with a window 205 formed therein. Surface 202 overlays a lower surface 201 on which messages 204a, 204b, 204c, 204d are printed. Surface 201 and surface 202 are attached via a two-prong brass pin 208. In the preferred embodiment, the pin 208 is inserted front-to-back through the surface 202 and then through surface 201, and the prongs 208a, 208b of the two-prong brass pin are flayed and glued 209 to the back face 201b of surface 201, as illustrated in FIG. 26. A surface 203 that may have an advertisement or novelty image 206 printed or adhered thereon is glued 209 or otherwise attached to the head 208c of the two-prong brass pin 208. Because surface 203 is fixedly and non-rotatably attached to surface 201 due to glue 209, messages 204a, 204b, 204c, 204d may therefore be selected by rotating the surface 203. Rotation of surface 203 therefore causes the surface 201 to rotate. In the alternative, a novelty item or other object may be adhered to the head 208c of the two-prong brass pin 208 in place of surface 203 and used to rotate the surface 201 to select the desired message 204a, 204b, 204c, 204d for display through window 205 on surface 202.

The shape and style of the message board 200 may be used to promote commercial products or services. In the illustrative embodiment, surface 202 is configured in the shape of a donut and preferably includes graphical imagery that further enhances the "donut" imagery. Further in this example, the rotational device is surface 203, which contains a novelty image, e.g., a cup of coffee, which further enhances the donut and coffee imagery. Messages may be selected by rotating the coffee cup (or the surface on which the coffee cup is printed/adhered). The advertiser may therefore be a coffee or donut manufacturer or vendor such that the donut and coffee imagery reminds the viewer of the coffee or donut vendor/manufacturer (i.e., the source of the donuts

or coffee). The advertisement may therefore contain the trademark or logo of the
2 vendor/manufacture of specific coffee or donuts.

It should be understood that the current invention is not limited to the
4 embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments
within the scope of the following claims.

6